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C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 001173

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2018  
TAGS: MOPS OSCE PHUM PREL UN GG RS GM  
SUBJECT: GERMANY: HUMANITARIAN AID LIMITED BY RUSSIAN  
INTERFERENCE

REF: A. A. BERLIN 01155  
    1B. B. TBILISI 01409  
    1C. C. SECSTATE 89769

Classified By: ACTING DCM JEFFREY RATHKE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: POLOFF met August 21 with Deputy Head of the Task Force for Humanitarian Aid and Mine Action Oliver Owczka and Desk Officer Miriam Lenz to discuss the findings of the delegation to Georgia August 20 and 21 (Ref A). Owczka and Lenz charged that the Russians had interfered with the delegation's humanitarian needs assessment, noting that Russian troops went so far as to detain the delegation for a short period. Despite the difficulties, however, the delegation determined that roughly a third of the additional funds will be distributed to CARE and to a fact-finding mission to determine whether there are mines in the Kodori Valley and to identify any unexploded ordinances in Gori. Tracking Ref C points, Owczka underlined that humanitarian aid was vitally important at this time and also emphasized the need for "symbolic support" for Georgia. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Owczka related that DAS-equivalent Michael von Ungern-Sternberg visited Gori August 20, but that the delegation along with the German ambassador, as reported in Ref B, were detained for several hours by Russian troops before entering Gori. Owczka also vaguely referred to other European countries facing similar difficulties and informed POLOFF that member countries are considering whether to deliver a demarche at the EU-level regarding Russia's treatment of diplomats. Owczka also related that Germany was frustrated by the difficulties in reaching South Ossetia to deliver aid.

13. (C) Based on the fact-finding mission's observations, Owczka said that Germany had identified the need for reconstruction of housing for IDPs and of infrastructure. According to the delegation, Gori was almost deserted and had clear damage to its infrastructure. The delegation, however, saw no signs of mass causalities there. Lenz confirmed that German officials would not send additional medical supplies in Georgia. POLOFF emphasized that the U.S. took claims of genocide from either party to the conflict very seriously and asked if the delegation saw any evidence of such acts. Owczka responded that while the mission was not focused on that allegation, the delegation had found little sign of casualties let alone signs of genocide.

14. (C) Lenz related that 250,000 euros would be given to CARE, a relief organization already present in Georgia, for the disbursement of mattresses, kitchen sets, blankets and such and that 100,000 euros will fund a mine action fact-finding mission. Both MFA officials were vague on how this mission would unfold, but they emphasized that Germany took claims of mines in the Kodori Valley and unexploded ordinances in the Gori region seriously. The mission will ascertain if these claims are true and then determine a course of action for dealing with the situation.

TIMKEN JR